

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED REDUCUTION IN THE PUPIL ADMISSION NUMBER from SEPTEMBER 2024



WHY WE ARE CONSULTING

This consultation is being carried out by Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the Local Governing Body of St Laurence RC Primary School, Cambridge, with the full support of the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.

St Laurence became a 1.5 form primary school in September 2011 following a period of significant local and national growth in pupil numbers. St Laurence, which had been a single form entry primary since its establishment in 1964, expanded to take 45 pupils in each year group.

The situation is very different now. As a result of the current and projected national fall in primary school pupil numbers, we now want to reduce the annual admission number from 45 to 30. This would mean that that only up to 30 pupils would be admitted into Reception Year (YR) from September 2024, which is the equivalent of one class. As a result and over time, as 30 rather than 45 children are admitted into YR each year, the school would reduce from its present overall number (278) to 210 pupils. We still expect to be able to take all children into YR whose parents want a place at our school with an admission number of 30. We now wish to consult with a wide range of relevant stakeholders on this proposal.

WHY WE WANT TO REDUCE THE ADMISSION NUMBER

Entry numbers to YR at St Laurence have been variable since the intake was increased in 2011; sometimes reaching 43/44 but often well below this number. Since 2019 there has been a marked decline in applications for entry to YR at St Laurence.

The number of pupils in all seven of the school's current year groups is lower than the published admission number of 45. By September 2024, five out of the seven year groups will have considerably less than 45 children, a pattern that is expected to continue in every subsequent year.

Legally, a school is not allowed to have classes in YR, Y1 and Y2 which have more than 30 pupils in them. The funding a school gets for teachers and support assistants is directly related to the number of children at the school. An admission number of 45 means we have to have more classes to meet the legal requirement on class sizes, but the lower number of pupils means we don't have enough funding to staff them. Our budget planning shows that this will inevitably result in a deficit budget for the school. Like all schools, we have a number of fixed financial costs, such as the costs of running and maintaining our site. All possible savings have already been made in these areas so no further savings can be made while still safely operating the school. An admission number of 30 from 2024 onwards would make the school's budget much more stable. This in turn would allow us to make the school educationally stronger and more viable for all its pupils both now and in the future

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will things change for children already in the school?

No. If the proposal is agreed, nothing will change until September 2024 when a maximum of 30 pupils will be admitted to Reception (YR). Admission numbers for children in Years 1 to 6 in 2024 will stay at 45 until those year groups have left the school.

Will there still be sufficient places for Catholic families?

Yes, we still expect to be able to accommodate all Catholic children wanting a place. On present patterns, Catholic children account for just over half of the children in the school. After the change, we still expect there to be around 10/13 places in each year group for children who are not Catholics but who would like a place at the school.

If St Laurence is reducing its intake, will there be space in other Cambridge City primary schools?

We believe so. The local education authority has advised that there is a surplus of places in other local schools at present and this is forecast to continue. The local authority has no objection to our proposal. However, should there be an unexpected need in the future for more school places in the local area, St Laurence will work proactively with the local authority to meet temporary school place needs.

How will any necessary reduction in staff be managed?

The reduction in staffing needed to take the school from 278 to 210 pupils (eleven classes to seven) will be a gradual process over seven years. There are established processes for managing staffing reductions and the school is already being proactive in its recruitment decisions in anticipation of lower pupil numbers from September 2024. We will take every opportunity to consult with staff who may be affected and their professional associations. In addition, we will take into consideration any other employment opportunities for deployment within Our Lady of Walsingham Trust, as well as fully supporting affected staff in seeking alternative job opportunities.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Before we can bring in the proposed change from 45 to 30 for September 2024, we must consult as set out in paragraphs 1.45-1.48 of the School Admissions Code (May 2021) and paragraph 1.3. Regulations 12 to 17 of the School Admissions Regulations (2012). We are therefore consulting between 12/12/2022 and 23/1/2023 with parents, local schools and a wide range of the school's other stakeholders to let them know of our wish to reduce the admission number with effect from September 2024.

If you have any views about this proposal, please let us know by writing to the office at St Laurence Catholic Primary School, Arbury Road, Cambridge CB4 2JX or office@stlaurence.cambs.sch.uk.

Once the consultation is complete and we have considered all comments we will then decide on the proposed reduction in the admission number by 28th February 2023. If agreed this will be reflected in the in the school's determined admissions arrangements for 2024/25 and published on the school's website as part of the School's Admissions policy.

Consultation on a proposal to reduce the admission number to Reception (Year R) at St Laurence RC Primary School, Cambridge in September 2024

Please tick one box.

Agree

Neither Agree or Disagree

Disagree

Don't Know

Please give your main reasons for your answer.

We would like to hear from many different people as your views will help us to decide whether or not we should make this change.

We will process your personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, which means that we will not give your personal data to any third parties.

Your comments will be anonymous - your name or anything that could identify you will not be included in any report. However, we cannot guarantee that this information will be withheld if it is requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

If you are happy to, please tell us who you are:

Parent of St Laurence School

Parent of another school in local area

School in local area

EYFS provider in local area

St Laurence School Staff

Local councillor

Local Authority

RC Diocese